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## I.—ON THE CONCEPTION OF LOW COMEDY IN ARISTOPHANES.<sup>1</sup>

Readers of Shakspeare will readily admit that such a passage as Hamlet's advice to the players may be taken as the author's lecture to the house on the proprieties of acting. Multiply such passages, introduce them as freely as was permitted by so unparalleled a degree of direct intercourse between author and audience as obtained in the Old Attic Comedy, and we should be able to gain a perception, partial indeed, but clear, of the poet's theory of dramatic art. In the plays and fragments of Aristophanes, expressions of opinion in regard to what things are creditable or legitimate in comedy, and what is not, occur in considerable number. Yet no one, hitherto, has taken the trouble to collect them, or to dissect the plays themselves in order to test how much or how little coincidence may be traced between the playwright's principles and his practice. Such utterances, to be sure, may be considered extraneous deliverances. Why not confine ourselves to analyzing the eleven extant plays of our author, and whatever remains of the twenty-nine lost ones?

The true criticism, of course, is that which begins with Aristarchos, by explaining Homer from Homer alone. The creative mind is sensible of a corresponding impulse. An artist is not obliged to ask the world into his workshop. Michael Angelo burned his sketches. Works of art explain themselves; we must learn their language. But the greatest artists have often been great teachers as well. Goethe, uncovering to view the secret

<sup>1</sup> An abstract of this paper appeared in the Proceedings of the American Philological Association for 1886.—B. L. G.

springs and workings of the poetic faculty, offsets Michael Angelo. And the Scholia Veneta, closely conned, will betray that even Aristarchos shared the inconsistency common to other leaders of thought. He, too, exclaimed his "Never, never!" forgetting his deviations toward the track of Zenodotos or Krates of Mallos from the strait trail blazed by himself. The law is paramount, not absolute. Analysis cannot unravel every synthesis. How many hearers or performers of Wagner's Lohengrin, unacquainted with his writings, recognize the descent of the Sangreal in its wonderful *ouverture*? The classical philologist and archaeologist, called upon to deal with fragments and torsos, corrupt texts and blunt replicas, with imitations of lost models, with parodies of originals now unknown, and caricatures of types forever defunct, can least afford to neglect casual revelations. It were different if the technical manuals known to antiquity, such as were written by some of the foremost architects, statuary, painters, orators, poets, playwrights, had survived. As it is, the horizon must be scanned for the faintest beacon that can flash a saving ray through a murky fog. The most trivial anecdote should be thoroughly exploited. Apelles, asked why he had painted Tyche, the goddess of Chance, seated, tartly answers: *οὐχ ἔστηκε γάρ*—because chance does not stand still. We all feel for the interviewer; but this is not all. The more than Roman baldness of the allegory is in the manner of Apelles and his time. Let your eye fall upon some terra-cotta slab with figures whose action recalls the proverbial expression "to take time by the forelock," and if nothing controverts the notion of an allegory, you will think of Apelles, or since your slab is a piece of sculpture, of his contemporary and rival Lysippos. Now listen to a description by Himerios (Ecl. XIV 1) of a noted work by that statuary: "Lysippos was not only a cunning craftsman, but also a brilliant thinker. Why, asks some one, what ideas did he ever put forth? He inscribed Kairos (Time, or rather Moment) among the gods, and made his nature plain by its image, embodying it in a statue. As well as I can remember, the work is after this fashion. Fancy a boy of soft proportions on the verge of youth, with flowing locks from his temples to his forehead, but with the posterior portion of his head bald, his right hand armed with a knife, his left held over a pair of scales, with his ankles winged, not that he may float above the ground, but so that while seeming to touch the soil he may steal up deceitfully without pressing it." Like Kairos, possibly, the poet who so often and

lovingly alludes to the glistening cerebral surface that earned him the nickname *ὁ φαλακρός*, evasively as, borne along on wings of imagination lent him by his own Birds, and bearing the bar of his scene-shifter's balance nicely poised on the razor-edge of his wit, he may slip from under Metanoia's fingers, may offer to Pronoia a forelock by which she can seize and hold him.

I find scattered through the plays of the great Aiginetan smiler passages I classify as follows :

1. Plain statements of what is right and wrong in drama and comedy.

*E. g.* ἀλλ' ἀποκρύπτειν χρὴ τὸ πονηρὸν τὸν γε ποιητήν,  
καὶ μὴ παράγειν μηδὲ διδάσκειν. τοῖς μὲν γὰρ παιδαρίοισιν  
ἔστι διδάσκαλος ὅστις φράζει, τοῖς ἡβῶσιν δὲ ποιηταί.  
πάνυ δὴ δεῖ χρηστὰ λέγειν ἡμᾶς.—Ranae, vv. 1053-1056.

What is wrong should be hid by an author.

He should not by any means drag into light, or put on the boards what is wicked;  
For a teacher of children is he that instructs, while poets are teachers of grown folk.

And hence we are bound to tell only the good.

Or negatively :

οὐ γὰρ πρεπῶδές ἐστι τῷ διδασκάλῳ  
ἰσχάδια καὶ τρωγᾶλια τοῖς θεωμένοις  
προβαλόντ', ἐπὶ τοῦτοις εἶτ' ἀναγκάζειν γελᾶν.

Plutus, vv. 797-799.

For it is not meet in the author of a play  
To throw to his spectators figs and sweets,  
Making them laugh at this.

2. Self-glorifications to the audience.

One passage will supply both positive and negative example.  
His play comes on the stage, not with all manner of farcical tricks.

ἀλλ' αὐτῇ καὶ τοῖς ἔπεσιν πιστεύουσ' ἐλήλυθεν.  
κἀγὼ μὲν τοιοῦτος ἀνὴρ ὢν ποιητὴς οὐ κομῶ,  
οὐδ' ὑμᾶς ζητῶ ἔξαπατᾶν δις καὶ τρίς ταῦτ' εἰσάγων,  
ἀλλ' αἰὲν καινὰς ἰδέας εἰσφέρων σοφίζομαι,  
οὐδὲν ἀλλήλαισιν ὁμοίας καὶ πάσας δεξιᾶς.—Nubes, vv. 544-548.

Reliant on itself alone, and what it may have said,  
And yet a poet such as I keeps still his level head,  
And never seeks to swindle you rehashing twice and thrice;  
For every play that I produce brings something new and nice.

## 3. Censure of predecessors and rivals.

In this, praise of himself is always implied, oftenest expressed. So he touches on the wretchedly careless performances of early comedy, in two fragments of the Danaids:

ὁ χορὸς δ' ἄρχεῖτ' ἂν ἐναψάμενος δάπιδας καὶ στρωματόδεσμα,  
διαμασχαλίσας αὐτὸν σχελίσιν καὶ φύσκαῖς καὶ ῥαφανίσιν.

Kock, *Comicorum Atticorum Fragmenta*, fr. 253.

When the chorus danced in a costume of rugs eked out with pieces of ticking,  
With spare spareribs and sausage-strings and radishes under its armpits.

οὕτως αὐτοῖς ἀταλαιπώρως ἢ ποίησις διέκειτο.—Fr. 254.

To such a degree was comedy then but a holiday task for the players.

Or he accuses a contemporary of plagiarism:

ἐκ δὲ τῆς ἐμῆς χλανίδος τρεῖς ἀπληγίδας ποιῶν.—Fr. 54.

Cutting from that mantle of mine three poor mantlets for himself.

The verse is a Eupolidean; enough to identify Eupolis as the "three-coated knave." Perhaps he is alluded to in the "twice and thrice" of the lines just quoted; if so, these lines, like the verses

Εὐπολὶς μὲν τὸν Μαρικᾶν πρότιστον παρείλκυσε  
ἐκστρέψας τοὺς ἡμετέρους Ἰππέας κακὸς κακῶς.—Nubes 553, 554.

On the stage his Marikas thus Eupolis brought with ill design,  
Palming off our play of The Knights misconceived in every line.

were inserted in the revision; for the Marikas, an attack on *Hyperbolos*, which would seem to have been modelled by Eupolis too much on the lines of his jealous young rival's *Knights*, was performed two years later than the *First Clouds* (Schol. Ar. Nub. 552). The *Knights* had been written in collaboration. It is quite likely that Aristophanes took a lion's share of the credit. Kirchhoff thinks (Herm. XIII 292) that Eupolis took occasion to vindicate his authorship of the parabasis by inserting it, with slight alterations, in his own piece. Fritzsche, according to Kock, s. fr. 54, identified the other two pieces Aristophanes had in mind as copies of the *Knights* with the *Golden Age*—which was virtually Mark Twain's and Dudley Warner's *Gilded Age* in a former state of existence, with Kleon in his prime for its special butt—and with the *Autolykos*. With Kock, I take exception to the pertinence of the latter piece. The pivotal figure of the *Knights* is that strange impersonation of the sovereign populace, twy-

natured Demos, who at the close is restored to his foretime glory. It is the Demoi of Eupolis, with its deliverance of the state from the incompetence of its politicians through the citation from Hades of the true statesmen, Solon, Miltiades, Aristides, and Perikles, that, more than any other of his known pieces, resembles the *Knights* in conception—which does not prevent its having served as a model for so different a piece as the *Frogs*. Some palpable similarity must have existed to make the gibe of Aristophanes possible, although I admit the justness of Cobet's remark (*Obs. crit.* 66, 7) that the flings of comic dramatists are not to be taken "*ad amussim*."

4. Before passing to another classification of the utterances, the sum of which I regard as having the value of a partial restitution of the poet's conscious literary creed, let me dispose of a category allied to my second and third, and which embraces commendation of kindred minds in the field of comic authorship. Krates is praised in a patronizing tone, ironically, for the cheap wit of his nonsense verses about ivory caviare, leather bottéls, and fleet-footed crabs:

ἦν μέγα τι βρῶμ' ἔτι τρυγθοποιομουσική,  
 ἡνίκα Κράτητί τε τάριχος ἐλεφάντινον  
 λαμπρὸν ἐκόμιζεν ἀπόνως παραβεβλημένον,  
 ἄλλα τε τοιαῦθ' ἕτερα μυρὶ' ἐκιχλίζετο.

Fr. 333, from *Thesm.* II.

The musical farce of an earlier day was a precious dish what year  
 Poor Krates tickled the general with his ivory caviare,  
 Unticklishly concocted, for all it looked so bright,  
 Like the thousand similar trifles he giggled with artless sleight.

Compare fr. 29 of Krates himself, and *Knights* 537-539:

οἷας δὲ Κράτης ὀργὰς ὑμῶν ἡνέσχετο καὶ στρυφελιγμούς \*  
 ὃς ἀπὸ συμκρᾶς δαπάνης ὑμᾶς ἀριστίζων ἀπέπεμπεν,  
 ἀπὸ κραμβοτάτου στόματος μάττων ἀστειοτάτας ἐπινοίας.

What caprices of yours poor Krates endured ! What derision and anger intense !  
 From you he had breakfasted often and well, albeit at little expense,  
 With the nonsense-jingle that his clear voice could attune to the merriest sense.

In the same way Magnes is commended, cordially enough, for the astonishing abundance of his resources in operatic stage-craft, *Knights* 520-525.

Kratinos is unreservedly exalted for his tempestuous force, and this in verse that imitates so grandly the torrent flow of his, that I

am disposed to think Horace acknowledged its spell in his famous tribute to Pindar. We know that the epode "*Beatus ille*" is imitated from Aristophanes (compare the long fr. 387, from the Islands).

Εἶτα Κρατίνου μεμνημένος, ὃς πολλῶ ρεύσας ποτ' ἐπαίνῳ  
διὰ τῶν ἀφελῶν πεδίων ἔρρει, καὶ τῆς στάσεως παρασύρων  
ἐφόρει τὰς δρυὲς καὶ τὰς πλατάνους καὶ τοὺς ἐχθροὺς προβελύμους.

Equites, vv. 526-528.

Again, he remembers Kratinos, whose flow in the pride of his praise  
Came down as a flood on the valley, uptearing the trees from their base,  
And bearing his foes with the oaks and the poplars adrift on its face.

Nor are his palpable hits in political song forgotten :

ἄσαι δ' οὐκ ἦν ἐν συμποσίῳ πλήν· Δωροῖ συκοπέδιλε,  
καί· τέκτονες εὐπαλάμων ὕμνων· οὕτως ἤνθησεν ἐκείνος.

Eq. vv. 529, 530.

When "*I fain would steal*" was the only song that any would call for at wine,  
Unless it were "*Ask me no more*"; for he blossomed and bloomed like a vine !

But the brilliancy of his former achievements also serves to place the dulness of his later efforts, his rapid *λῆρος*, now that he is played out (the figure is elaborate; the author elsewhere speaks of *γέροντες ἐκκεκρουμένοι*, just as he says τοῦ γὰρ τεχνάζειν ἡμέτερος ὁ πυραμοῦς, "for clever trickery we take the cake," Thesm. v. 94), vv. 531-536.

It is Euripides in whose mouth, in order to convict him out of it, Aristophanes puts his definition of the office of the poet :

Αἲς. τίς οὐνεκα χρεὶ θανμάζειν ἄνδρα ποιητήν;  
ΕΥΡ. δεξιότητος καὶ νοουθεσίας, ὅτι βελτίους τε ποιούμεν  
τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ἐν ταῖς πόλεσιν.—Ranae, vv. 1008-1010.

Αἲς. Now what is the thing in a poet we ought to admire ?

ΕΥΡ. His wit, to be sure, and the teaching he does, whence citizens learn to aspire

To the good in our towns.

There is no flavor of "art for art's sake" about this, nor will it be found anywhere in Aristophanes. In the succeeding verses the effect of such plays as the Seven against Thebes and the Persians is dwelt on. All great poets, says Aischylos, have been great teachers as well, their works are storehouses of useful knowledge (Frogs 1013-1036). From Homer Aischylos took shining exam-

ples of virtues, the emulation of which is profitable to the state (1040-1042). With this the practice of Euripides is contrasted (1043-1046), and its evil influence is exposed (1047-1051). To Euripides advancing that his subjects were given as he took them, the answer is that it is a poet's duty to cover and hide evil (1053, 1054), for the reason that they are the teachers of the people (1054-1056, the lines quoted first of any). Treatment and words must comport with the greatness of the sentiments and thoughts to be expressed by them; in this Aischylos is as successful as Euripides is deficient (1056-1064):

ἀνάγκη

μεγάλων γνώμων καὶ διανοιῶν ἴσα καὶ τὰ ῥήματα τίκτειν.

Is it Aristophanes or Matthew Arnold<sup>1</sup> that is extolling to us the important quality of "high seriousness," the *σπουδαιότης* wherein Aristotle<sup>2</sup> sought the distinction of poetry from prosy fact?

The poet can specify as well as he generalizes. Unlofty treatment does not command the respect essential to the moral effect of example (1064-1066). The quibbling spirit encouraged by Euripides has corrupted the younger generation (1069-1076). And then the charges against Euripides are recapitulated (1076-1098), especially as regards the *physical* degeneracy of the "jeunesse dorée" of Athens. The picture drawn of it is an antithesis to the promises made to Pheidippes on condition of his accepting the guidance of the *Δίκαιος Λόγος* (Clouds 1002-1014), and a parallel to the alternative there described (Clouds 1015-1023). Aristophanes' conception of corporeal beauty is, like his political, social, and literary views, an archaizing one; the sculptured figure of Aristion, who was possibly a body guardsman of Peisistratos, or the similar one from Ikaria, which Mr. Carl D. Buck publishes in the March number of the American Journal of Archaeology for this year, will best illustrate his description of the ideal, old-time Athenian physique.

The comic poet, if he too is to be a teacher, must have a policy to advocate before his people. The best exposition of Aris-

<sup>1</sup> "The superior character of truth and seriousness, in the matter and substance of the best poetry, is inseparable from the superiority of diction and movement marking its style and manner. The two superiorities are closely related, and are in steadfast proportion one to the other."—Matthew Arnold in his Introduction to Ward's English Poets.

<sup>2</sup> Aristot. de arte poetica 9: φιλοσοφώτερον καὶ σπουδαιότερον ποιήσεις ἱστορίας ἔστιν.



tophanes' policy is the parabasis of the Acharnians, that is to say, the *παράβασις κατ' ἐξοχήν* (vv. 628-658). Impelled to declare himself by the accusation of having satirized Athenian institutions in a malicious and unpatriotic fashion, in the play "The Babylonians" (vv. 628-632), he recounts his good deserts, which are well understood abroad (vv. 633-658). He claims credit for having cured the Athenians of their guileless susceptibility to interested flattery, a weakness that often made them victims of wily strangers (vv. 633-641), and for making his fellow-citizens aware of what is going on in the subject cities (v. 642). The poet is actuated by public spirit, he advises things that are for the good of the city (v. 656, as in the Wasps, vv. 1017 and 1037, and the Peace, vv. 759, 760). His doctrines are called by their promulgator "the right" (*τὰ δίκαια*, Eq. v. 510, Ach. vv. 645, 655; *τὸ εὖ καὶ τὸ δίκαιον*, 661), "the best" (*τὰ βέλτιστα*, Ach. v. 658), or "those of the best" (Eq. vv. 507-510), or merely "lots of good things" (Ach. v. 656), which he proposes to himself to inculcate without wheedling, offering of bribes, or humbug (Ach. v. 657), trickery or flattery (Ach. v. 658). He will be and is plain (Vesp. v. 1015), frank (Nub. v. 518), and true (Nub. v. 519), no respecter of person provided his onslaught be a justifiable one (Vesp. vv. 1025-1028), not open to corruption by bribes (Vesp. v. 1036). He boasts in many passages of his readiness to show that he has the courage of his convictions; to declare what is right in mid-Athens is a risky business, yet he did so, and earned a reputation abroad by so doing:

*παρεκινδύνευσ' εἰπεῖν ἐν Ἀθηναίοις τὰ δίκαια.*

*οὕτω δ' αὐτοῦ περὶ τῆς τόλμης ἦδη πόρρω κλέος ἦκει, κτλ.*

Ach. vv. 645, 646.

*τολμᾷ τε λέγειν τὰ δίκαια,*

*καὶ γενναίως πρὸς τὸν Τυφῶ χωρεῖ καὶ τὴν ἐριώλην.*

Eq. vv. 510, 511.

In the Acharnians already, he bravely threatened to chop Kleon to pieces for the benefit of the knights (Ach. vv. 300, 301), and defied him, confident in a just cause (vv. 659-664). And his performance must have given him immense satisfaction, to judge by such grandiloquences as he uses whenever he refers to the fray; so Wasps 1029-1036, where it is assimilated to the combat of Herakles with the Trojan shark or the Lernaean hydra, it is hard to tell which. It is well known how he actually was obliged to act the part of the Paphlagonian in the Knights in person, because

no actor dared to put on the portrait mask of Kleon that he required it to be played in; so he brags in his next piece of how he made bold to strike the monster in the paunch, though too generous to jump on him when he was down (*Nubes*, vv. 549, 550). The admission that he got a horsewhipping for the first attack sheds a queerish light on this noble impulse; of course he denies that he gave bonds to keep silent (*Vespae*, vv. 1284-1291), although shamefully deserted by those who should have supported him—to *punish them* he boxed up his jokes for a brief while. But his war upon the sophists and idle speculators, socialists and lawless conspirators, those fevers of the body politic, was equally meritorious, almost. The alarm of these people was great when they saw that Aristophanes had risen up against them, a powerful

ἀλεξίκακος τῆς χάρας τῆσδε καθαρτῆς (v. 1043).

The more shame on his people to fail him at this juncture, i. e. to place the Demijohn of old Kratinos and the Konnos of Ameipsias, trivial plays, before their champion's *Clouds* (*Vespae*, vv. 1037-1050), the best comedy ever played, its author assures them. With Aristophanes, his last-performed piece is always his best, with the sole exception of the play on which the curtain is lifted!

All this may seem to have very little bearing on the subject of low comedy, but it is the necessary prelude to an intelligent collection of the direct references to whatever was classed under that head by the author of the *Knights* and the *Birds*. It is his conception of low comedy I would apprehend and examine, not my own. The proof of what I have just said is found in the parabasis of the *Peace*:

... ἀφελὼν κακὰ καὶ φόρτον καὶ βωμολοχεύματ' ἀγέννη,  
ἐποίησε τέχνην μεγάλην ἡμῖν ἀπύργωσ' οἰκοδομήσας  
ἔπεισιν μεγάλοις καὶ διανοίαις καὶ σκώμμασιν οὐκ ἀγοραίοις,  
οὐκ ἰδιώτας ἀνθρωπίσκους κωμῳδῶν οὐδὲ γυναῖκας,  
ἀλλ' Ἑρακλέους ὀργὴν τιν' ἔχων τοῖσι μεγίστοις ἐπέχειρει . . .

Pax, vv. 748-752.

By leaving aside the disgrace of the stage, low farce and the quips of the mart, He founded and built us a structure of stone, a truly magnificent art; For he cast great thoughts in magniloquent form, neither found half his jokes in the gutter, Nor cared to attack with his weapons of wit small fry and the feminine flutter; But fired with the ardor that Herakles felt he attempted the hardest of labors.

Then follow the verses from the Wasps describing his great conflict with the hydra from the stinking tanner's vat (Peace 752-759 = Wasps 1030-1036, with few slight verbal alterations). We see that on his pre-eminence in the virtues and merits he ascribes to himself rests his claim to be considered the founder of the *τέχνη μεγάλη*, of the grand style in comedy. His are the new plots and clever conceits that his hearers ought to carry home and put with the quinces between the folds of the articles of dress in their clothes-presses, so that they may keep the aroma of his wit about them (Wasps 1051-1059). His is the mystic choir that will have nothing to do with whomsoever the ponderous Kratinos has not initiated to the pure service of Bakchos, with whosoever, knowing not the orgies of the nobler Muses, rejoices in vulgarities introduced out of place (Ranae, vv. 354-358).

Now for the incuse reverse of this Capuan medal. To learn his negative merits, let us begin with the enumeration of the ignoble vulgarities, farcical business, and other evils happily sifted out and thrown away as not comporting with the high seriousness of this grand style, this new gospel of comedy, of which Aristophanes is the evangelist. It is the prelude to his more positive deserts in the same parabasis of the Peace :

ἄξιός ἐιναι φησ' εὐλογίας μεγάλης ὁ διδάσκαλος ἡμῶν.  
 πρῶτον μὲν γὰρ τοὺς ἀντιπάλους μόνος ἀνθρώπων κατέπαυσεν  
 εἰς τὰ βράκια σκώπτοντας αἰεὶ, καὶ τοῖς φθειρσὶν πολεμοῦντας·  
 τοὺς δ' Ἡρακλέας τοὺς μάττοντας, καὶ τοὺς πεινῶντας ἐκείνους  
 ἐξήλασ' ἀτιμώσας πρῶτος, καὶ τοὺς δούλους παρέλυσεν  
 τοὺς φεύγοντας κᾶξαπατῶντας καὶ τυπτομένους ἐπιτήδες,  
 οὓς ἐξῆγον κλαίοντας αἰεὶ, καὶ τούτους εἵνεκα τουδί,  
 ἵν' ὁ σύνδουλος σκώψας αὐτοῦ τὰς πληγὰς, εἴτ' ἀνέροιτο,  
 ὦ κακόδαιμον, τί τὸ δέρμ' ἔπαθες; μῶν ὑστριχὶς εἰσέβαλέν σοι  
 εἰς τὰς πλευρὰς πολλῇ στρατιᾷ κἀδενδροτόμησε τὸ νῶτον;

Pax, vv. 738-747.

So even his rivals were forced to "reform altogether" the low comedy whose principal method of provoking laughter was the constant and wearisome employment of farcical stock scenes and properties, rags and lice, the Epicharmian figure of Herakles gorging himself and wagging his ears, or ravenously hungry, slaves cheating their masters outrageously, or chased and beaten, then brought in blubbering to be butts for wrought jokes by a comrade: Poor fellow, was it a cat-of-nine-tails that invaded your ribs with superior numbers and devastated your back?

What a vivid vision this sample-list gives us of the nature of *φόρτος*, τὸ φορτικόν, or ἡ φορτικὴ κωμωδία, as it is severally styled. But suppose we take another one, found in the prologue-argument of the Wasps:

ΞΑΝ. φέρε νυν κατεῖπω τοῖς θεαταῖς τὸν λόγον,  
 ὀλίγ' ἄθ' ὑπειπὼν πρῶτον αὐτοῖσιν ταδί,  
 μηδὲν παρ' ἡμῶν προσδοκᾶν λίαν μέγα,  
 μηδ' αὖ γέλωτα Μεγαρόθεν κεκλεμμένον.  
 ἡμῖν γὰρ οὐκ ἔστ' οὔτε κάρυ' ἐκ φορμίδος  
 δούλω διαρριπτοῦντε τοῖς θεωμένοις,  
 οὔθ' Ἡρακλῆς τὸ δεῖπνον ἐξαπατῶμενος,  
 οὔδ' αὖθις ἐνασελγαίνόμενος Εὐριπίδης  
 οὔδ' εἰ Κλέων γ' ἐλαμψε τῆς τύχης χάριν,  
 αὖθις τὸν αὐτὸν ἄνδρα μυττωτεύσομεν.  
 ἀλλ' ἔστιν ἡμῖν λογίδιον γνώμην ἔχον,  
 ὑμῶν μὲν αὐτῶν οὐχὶ δεξιώτερον,  
 κωμωδίας δὲ φορτικῆς σοφώτερον.—Vespae, vv. 54–66.

Mark that Aristophanes descends in the Wasps from the too lofty level of the intangible Clouds to a bid for popular appreciation, but not to the catch-penny devices of the farcical comedy. And what may these be? Megarian jokes, not imitations of the early Megarian comedy, a fiction Wilamowitz has exploded, but ridicule of their Dorian neighbors, always pleasing to Athenian ears, in one category with which belongs the brace of slaves that scatters nuts from a basket among the audience, belongs Herakles choused out of his dinner, would belong the repetitiousness of making Euripides do duty again as the butt of the author's wit, or of making another onslaught on Kleon. This shabby custom of scattering fruits is again reprehended on the occasion of a show offering for the recovery of sight by Plutos (see vv. 768, 769):

ΓΥΝΗ. φέρε νυν, νόμος γάρ ἐστι, τὰ καταχύσματα  
 ταυτὶ καταχέω σου λαβοῦσα. ΠΛ. μηδαμῶς.

Plutus, vv. 789, 790.

Again:

ΓΥΝΗ. εἴτ' οὐχὶ δέξει δῆτα τὰ καταχύσματα;  
 ΠΛ. ἔνδον γε παρὰ τὴν ἐστίαν, ὥσπερ νόμος  
 ἔπειτα καὶ τὸν φόρτον ἐκφύγοιμεν ἂν.

Plutus, vv. 794–796.

The author always contrives to work some unexpected joke out

of the *καταχύσματα*, however, the occurrence of which in so many plays was the pretext for the fig-scramble diversion. They are to him what a hat of peculiar individuality is to Dr. Holmes, an irresistible object to wreak his wit upon. Often it is but the merest ghost of an allusion, unintelligible out of its context; often the reader is but permitted to guess at an actor's significant look or movement. Yet the incomparable poet himself evidently stooped to this execrable trick once, if not oftener, as may be seen from Peace 959-972, where the servants of Trygaeos throw barley spelt and splash water on the house, and that in immoderate quantities. Of course, the preacher had to kick over the traces once in awhile, if only to give his moralizings a new lease of life with the old joke. If introducing the torch as a coercive in the *Lysistrata* (1216-1218, compare 1221) is deprecated as *φορτικόν*, farcical, and one of the distinctions of the *Clouds* is the suppression, in its performance, of torches and inarticulate howls, it is only from the singeing that follows the shaving of Mnesilochos by Euripides in the *Thesmophoriazousai* (236-248), accompanied with his shouts of pain, that we obtain a true perception of the laughableness of this sort of buffoonery. "I am scornfully amused," if I may quote Ruskin in this assemblage, at any one who should know his Aristophanes as thoroughly as Kock taking him as seriously as he does (see the notes to the prologue of the *Frogs* 1-18, in his edition of the play). With genius, especially when it is sportive, glaring inconsistencies are a matter of course. In that passage, if anywhere, the moralizing is hardly more than a hook from which to hang the very vulgarities, the *βωμολοχεύματα ἀγεννή*, so severely condemned. Aristophanes plays a double part, he is both the god who forbids his slave to complain of his load (vv. 3-5), and the slave that hastens to ejaculate the precise words (vv. 20 and 30) he has just been forbidden to employ. But to complete the list of things and doings peculiar to the low comedy of Aristophanes, having noted these forbidden words and inarticulate expressions of loaded slaves, I turn to another comprehensive passage, already quoted from :

ὥς δὲ σῶφρων ἐστὶ φύσει σκέψασθ' ἥ τις πρῶτα μὲν  
οὐδὲν ἦλθε ῥαψαμένη σκύτινον καθειμένον,  
ἐρυθρὸν ἐξ ἄκρου, παχύ, τοῖς παιδίοις ἴν' ἢ γέλως·  
οὐδ' ἔσκωψε τοὺς φαλακροὺς, οὐδὲ κόρδαχ' εἴλκυσεν,  
οὐδὲ πρεσβύτης ὁ λέγων τᾷ τῇ βακτηρία

τύπτει τὸν παρόντ', ἀφανίζων πονηρὰ σκώμματα,  
οὐδ' εἰσηῆξε δᾶδας ἔχουσ', οὐδ' ἰοὺ ἰοὺ βοᾷ,  
ἀλλ' αὐτῇ καὶ τοῖς ἔπεισιν πιστεύουσ' ἐλήλυθεν.

Nubes, vv. 537-544.

The new features in this description of things avoided in the Clouds, characteristic, like the poor jokes, beatings, and inarticulate howls already touched upon, of the φορτικὴ κωμῳδία, are the survival on the stage of the phallus and the obscene dance cancan-kordax, and one of lighter weight, though not to be condoned by a poet whose own head had grown beyond the hair-line, viz. heartless allusions to the baldheads. The juxtaposition of the cancan-kordax proves that the perennial reflections of our own comic papers on the same subject are a true Attic survival! Indecencies, generally, come under the same head of φῶρτος, and are more than once condemned on this account, as Vespaie, vv. 1173-1176, Eccl. v. 371, where the condemnation is faint, or Nubes, vv. 293-297; they should be left to the τρυγοδαίμονες, who are identical with the ἄνδρες φορτικοί, of whom Phrynichos is chief. Of him Aristophanes speaks as of the patron saint of the kordax (Wasps 1490); it is from him that Eupolis copies this feature, together with the drunken old woman that introduces it in the Marikas (Clouds 553-556); it is his name that heads the triumvirate of farcical playwrights in the prologue of the Frogs: Φρύνιχος . . . καὶ Λύκις κἀμειψίας. Ameipsias is again branded as an ἀνὴρ φορτικός in the Clouds, with the great Kratinos himself, who, galled perhaps by the taunts in the Knights, had roused himself to administer a signal defeat to Aristophanes and the Clouds on its first performance (Clouds, Argument V):

εἴτ' ἀνεχώρουν ὑπ' ἀνδρῶν φορτικῶν  
ἡττηθεῖς, οὐκ ἄξιός ᾤν.—Nubes, vv. 524, 525.

What happened? I departed beaten, upon my word,  
By writers of low comedy, improperly preferred.

In fine, not a word of censure for the writings of rivals and not a self-glorification in the whole of Aristophanes but contributes to draw more and more sharply, to make more and more distinct, the line that divides the low comedy, that of his predecessors and rivals on the comic stage, from the grand, which is his own. At the first blush, to be sure, accusations of plagiarism like that flung at Eupolis, or the malicious comment on the theft of a figure about eels by certain other imitators (Clouds 559), would hardly seem

to be tantamount to a characterization of the pieces in which they occurred as partaking of the nature of low comedy. With Aristophanes, however, they are. The stock scene, the stale joke, the stolen plot and figure, are φορτικά.

οὔτε ποιηταῖσι γὰρ  
σκληροῖς ὁ δῆμος ἥδεται κάστεμφέσιν.—Fr. 579.

For the people takes  
Small pleasure in poets hard-rooted in a rut.

His pride is based on having broken with all this:

οὐ γὰρ τίθεμεν τὸν ἀγῶνα τόνδε τὸν τρόπον  
ὥσπερ τέως ἦν, ἀλλὰ καινῶν πραγμάτων.

Fr. 528, from the Telemessians.

The reason even his genius attacked comic composition in the firm conviction that it was the most difficult of all arts—νομίζων κωμφοδοδιδασκαλίαν εἶναι χαλεπώτατον ἔργον πάντων, Equites, v. 516—is his unwillingness to make it easy by letting his reputation depend on his skill at tricks he despised:

λόγῳ γὰρ ἡγωνιζόμεσθ', ἔργοισι δ' οὔ.

Fr. 529, *e restitutione Bergkii*.

On words, not on stage business, we depended.

Of course, Aristophanes must not be taken too seriously. He cracked his ancient or vulgar jokes with perfect equanimity. The old grammarians, who had his originals before them, were able, as a modern one is not, to point out his petty stealings, *e. g.* *Schol. in Thesmoph. ad v. 215*, τα γένεια δὲ ταῦτα ἔλαβεν ἐκ τῶν Ἰδαίων Κρατίνου, one of the very ἄνδρες φορτικοί of the moralizing plagiarist. But after all, a conscious ideal as laboriously kept in view as Aristophanes occasionally betrays his was kept, even in the routine elements of his stage-craft—

ἀλλ' ἐξάγετ', εἴ τι φιλεῖτ', ὀρχούμενοι θύραζε  
ὑμεῖς ταχύ. τοῦτο γὰρ οὐδεὶς πω πάρος δέδρακεν,  
ὀρχούμενον ὅστις ἀπήλλαξεν χορὸν τρυγῶδῶν.

Vespae 1535-1537.

So tread it along, if you like, and dance away to doorwards  
As quick as you can; for as yet no play had this conclusion,  
Or author of comedy dared dismiss his chorus dancing.

will leave its trace. Certainly none will deny that the success of Aristophanes' endeavor to

ρήματά τε κομψὰ καὶ παίγνι' ἐπιδεικνύναι  
πάντ' ἀπ' ἀκροφυσίων ἀπὸ καναβευμάτων.—Fr. 699.

Produce or delicate phrase or bright conceits  
Fresh from the modelling stand and bellows' snout.

was at least proportionate, to accept Matthew Arnold's equation between a writer's substance and his style, to the happy medium he claimed for the diction he had modelled on that of Euripides; comp. his characterization by Kratinos as *εὐριπιδαριστοφανίζων*, Euripidaristophanes, as it were, and fr. 471, from the Tent Strikers:

χρῶμαι γὰρ αὐτοῦ τοῦ στόματος τῷ στρογγύλῳ,  
τοὺς νοῦς δ' ἀγοραίους ἦτον ἢ κείνος ποιῶ.

I use the roundness of his mouth; my thought  
I try to keep less every-day than his.

as he himself defines it:

διάλεκτον ἔχοντα μέσσην πόλεως,  
οὐτ' ἀστείαν ὑποθηλυτέραν  
οὐτ' ἀνελεύθερον ὑπαγροικότεραν.—Fr. 685.

Mine is the middle language of the town,  
No feminine prattle super-citified,  
Nor country swains' rude speech.

ALFRED EMERSON.